

# Eipo language

**Eipo** (Eipomek), or **Lik**, is a Mek language of the eastern highlands of Eipumek District, Pegunungan Bintang Regency, West Papua. It spoken by the Eipo people who live along the Eipo River. A large percentage of its vocabulary is shared with Una and Tanime, and they form one dialect area.<sup>[3]</sup>

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## Classification

Eipo belongs to the Eastern branch of Mek languages, which is a family of closely related languages belonging to the larger grouping of Trans-New Guinea languages.

## Geographic distribution

The Eipo language is spoken by about 3,000 people along the Eipo River in the valley of Eipomek, which is situated in the eastern highlands of West Papua.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Phonology

### Consonants

Eipo exhibits the following 16 phonemic consonants:<sup>[4]</sup>

Eipo	
<i>Lik</i>	
<b>Native to</b>	Indonesia
<b>Region</b>	Eipo River area in Eipumek District, Pegunungan Bintang Regency, West Papua
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Eipo people
<b>Native speakers</b>	(3,000 cited 1987) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Trans–New Guinea <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mek<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Eastern<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Eipo</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Writing system</b>	Latin
Language codes	
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	eip
<b>Glottolog</b>	eipo1242 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/eipo1242</span> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

### Consonant phonemes

	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Labio-dental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>
<u>Plosive</u>	p   b		t   d	c	k   g
<u>Fricative</u>	β	f	s		
<u>Nasal</u>	m		n		ŋ
<u>Tap or flap</u>			r		
<u>Approximant</u>				j	

- /p/ indicates a labialized [p<sup>w</sup>ə].<sup>[5]</sup>
- /c/ indicates a palatalized [tʲ].<sup>[5]</sup>

## Vowels

Eipo has five phonemic vowels:<sup>[4]</sup>

### Monophthong phonemes

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	i		u
<u>Open-mid</u>	e		o
<u>Open</u>		a	

Diphthongs are not regarded as separate phonemes.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Grammar

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### Morphology

Eipo is generally isolating language, but exhibits an elaborate system of agglutination in verb formation.

### Syntax

The usual word order of Eipo is subject-object-verb (SOV).

## Deictics

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Eipo has only four basic spatial deictics, which are usually accompanied by pointing gestures, since the deictics are used during face-to-face communication to refer to positions relative to the person.<sup>[6]:119</sup>

- a- ‘here’
- ei- ‘up there’
- ou-, u- ‘down there’
- or-, er- ‘across there’ (‘across-valley’)

# Interrogatives

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Eipo has many compound interrogatives:<sup>[6]:95</sup>

- *yate* ‘what?, which?, what kind of?’
  - *yate anye* ‘who?’
  - *yate ate* ‘why? (what for)’
  - *yate arye* ‘why? (what reason)’
  - *yate-barye* ‘why?’
  - *yate-sum* ‘when? (what day/time)’
- *dan-* ‘where?, where to, whence’
  - *dan-segum* ‘whereabouts? (approximate location)’
  - *dan-tam* (“where side”) ‘where, whence, whereto’
  - *dan-ak* (“where at”) ‘where, whence, whereto’

## Writing system

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Eipo is not historically a written language, but in recent decades a Latin alphabet has been devised for it. The letter values are mostly those of the IPA letters given above, with the exceptions of /β/ ⟨w⟩, /ŋ/ ⟨ng⟩, /r/ ⟨r⟩, and /j/ ⟨y⟩.

## References

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1. Eipo (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/eip/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
  2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Eipomek" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/eipo1242>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
  3. Heeschen 1998, p. 18.
  4. Heeschen 1998, p. 117.
  5. Heeschen 1998, p. 118.
  6. Pawley, Andrew; Hammarström, Harald (2018). "The Trans New Guinea family". In Palmer, Bill (ed.). *The Languages and Linguistics of the New Guinea Area: A Comprehensive Guide*. The World of Linguistics. 4. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. pp. 21–196. ISBN 978-3-11-028642-7.
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